1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

vivacity awakened in the Seri bystanders by their spokesman's frequent interlocutions with them during the recital. Unfortunately the account was not clear as to the seasons selected, though the expressions indicated that the feasts are fixed for times at which the young are fully fledged. It would seem inconceivable that the Seri, with their insatiate appetite for eggs and tender young, should consciously respect a breeding time or establish a closed season to perpetuate any game; yet it is probable that the pelican is somehow protected in such wise that it is not only not exterminated or exiled, but actually fostered and cultivated. It is certain that the mythical Ancient of Pelicans is the chief creative deity of Seri legend, and its living representative the chief tutelary of one of the clans; it is certain, too, that this fleshly fowl, sluggish and defenseless as it is on its sleeping grounds, would be the easiest source of Seri food if it were hunted indiscriminately; and it is no less certain that the omnivorous tribesmen would quickly extinguish the local stock if they were to make its kind, including eggs and young, their chief diet; yet it survives in literal thousands to patrol the waters of all Seriland in far-stretching files and vees seldom out of sight in suitable weather. On the whole, it would seem evident that an interadjustment has grown up between the tribesmen and their fish-eating tutelary during the centuries, whereby the fowl is protected, albeit subconsciously only, during the breeding seasons; and in view of other characteristics of the tribe it would seem equally evident that the protection is in some way effected by means of ceremonies and tabus.

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Somewhat analogous, though apparently less ceremonial, expeditions are made to Isla Patos and other points in search of ducks, and to Isla San Esteban, and still more distant islands in search of eggs (preferably near the hatching point) and nestlings; while the abundant waterfowl of the region are sought in Rada Ballena and other sheltered bays, as well as in such landlocked lagoons as those of Punta Miguel and Punta Arena. This hunting involves the use of bows and arrows, though the archery of the tribe pertains rather to the chase of larger land game, and apparently attains its highest development in connection with warfare. No specialized fowling devices have been observed among the Seri; and their autonomous recitals, the facies of their artifacts, and the observed habits of the tribe (especially the youth) with respect to birds, all indicate that ordinary fowling holds a subordinate place in Seri craft—i. e., that it is a fortuitous and emergency avocation, rather than an organized art like turtle-fishing and water-carrying. Concordantly, culinary processes are not normally employed in connection with waterfowl, and the customary implements used for incising the skin and severing other tissues are the shell-cup, which is carried habitually for other purposes, the cane-splint, which appears to be improvised on occasion and never carried habitually, and the ubiquitous hupf.

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Summarily, the customary apparel of Seri men and women may be regarded as limited to three articles—(1) a kilt, normally of coarse textile fabric, which is made a prime necessity by a well-developed pudency; (2) a short wammus, also normally of coarse textile fabric, which is apparently regarded as a convenience and luxury rather than a necessity; and (3) a robe, normally of pelican skin, sometimes substituted for either or both of the other articles, but ordinarily used as bedding or as a buckler. The most valued of these articles is the robe, which in the absence of the others replaces the kilt; yet pudency demands the habitual use of some form of kilt, while both wammus and robe are held so far superfluous that they may be laid aside or bartered or otherwise dispensed with whenever occasion arises. 291

On considering the special functions and probable genesis of the Seri appareling, the student is impressed by the absence of the breech-clout, except perhaps in temporary improvisations—though the absence of this widespread article of primitive costumery need awaken little surprise in view of the environment, and especially of the abounding barbs of Seriland, which render all appareling of doubtful value save for the protection of tissues softened by habitual covering. The prevailing thorniness of the habitat renders the free-flowing and easily removable apron the most serviceable protection for the exposed vitals of the pubic region; and this device, a common one in thorny habitats generally, grades naturally into the short skirt or kilt; while it would well accord with the maritime habit and habitual thought of the Seri to apply the tough and densely feathered skin of the pelican to the purpose. This suggestion as to the nascent covering of the tribe consists with the tribal faith, in which the Ancient of Pelicans ranks as the creative deity, while its modern representative is esteemed a protective tutelary possessing talismanic powers against cold, wet, bestial claw and fang, alien arrows, and all other evils; so that the use of this feathered pelt as a shield against spiny shrubbery, sharp-leaved sedges, and barb-thorned cacti is quite in harmony with Seri philosophy. Accordingly it seems clear that the pelican-skin kilt was autochthonous among the Seri, and that it was the original form of tribal appareling; and it is of no small significance that the type persists in actual use as well as in suggestive vestigial forms, such as pelican-down swaddling for infants, pelican-feather plumes on cradle nets, etc. 182 291 [176] [174]

The passage from the pelican-skin kilt to the garment of textile fabric under the slow processes of primitive thought may not be traced confidently, though a strong suggestion arises in the Seri hair-cult (a Samsonian faith not without parallel in far higher culture) under which mystical powers and talismanic virtues are imputed to the human pelage. It is in connection with this cult that the Seri locks are so attentively cultivated and so assiduously preserved and consecrated to more intimate personal uses in belts, necklaces, and the like; and although the connecting links have not been found, it is thoroughly 174 291 826

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

is an infallible remedy. On the whole it seems probable that the yerba mala (*Sebastiana bilocularis?*), or yerba de flecha, or mago, or magot, yielded or formed the standard arrow-poison of the Opata and perhaps of other Indians, and that the ill-repute of the shrub survived and spread throughout Mexicanized Sonora in such frequent repetition and common belief as to affect the ideas of residents and travelers alike; but it seems equally probable that the magic-inspired brew of the Seri is entirely distinct.[1]

As suggested by widespread primitive customs, and as illustrated specifically by the arrow-charming, the warfare of the Seri is largely sortilegic, this feature being but an extension and magnification of a corresponding feature of their hunting customs. The economic object of the chase is, of course, the flesh of the quarry; but the hunt normally begins with invocatory or other fiducial ceremonies, culminates in a feast opened with oblations, and ends in the use of horns or hoofs, teeth or bones, mane or tail, as talisman-trophies—primarily pledges of fealty to the favorable potencies, only secondarily symbols of success. The observances illumine the ever-present esoteric object of the chase, which is to gain the favor or overcome the power of the beast-god represented by the animal hunted; in general, this is sought to be effected through mimetic movements, or symbolic objects, associated with that animal-kind, and the retained charm-trophy is valued as a symbol of the placation or outwitting of a particular deity. Similarly, the Seri warrior strives for the supposed deific symbols of the enemy—the scalp or headdress or arrow of the alien tribesman, the fire-breathing and echo-waking (as well as death-dealing) wand of the Caucasian; and the Papago arrows, Yaqui scalps, and white man's firearms are sought avidly, treasured as fetishes, and often carried conspicuously as badges of borrowed prowess.[2] So the Seri are never without alien insignia in the form of weapons. The day before the 1895 expedition entered their stronghold, a band of warriors and women were frightened from a freshly slaughtered cow by a party of vaqueros so suddenly that their arms were left behind—and these

[1] It should be noted that the actuality of the poisonous property ascribed to the yerba mala is in some degree questionable; the plant is the only one of southern Papagueria yielding suitable material for arrow-shafts, and it is possible (if not probable) that it was consecrated to this purpose by the aboriginal Opata and protected by tabu in such wise as to become a sacred and fearsome thing. It is accordingly by no means improbable that the reputed poisonous property is but the product of generations of association, and that the plant is really harmless—an inference supported by experiments on the part of the leader of the 1895 expedition, who swallowed the juice of stem and leaves in two or three minute but increasing doses without perceptible effect. On the other hand, it should be observed that the region is one abounding in toxic juices, and that this shrub is so luxuriant and so free from thorny armament and other protective devices of a mechanical sort as to raise the presumption that it must be protected against herbivorous animals, at least, by chemical constituents of some kind (cf. ante, p. 25).

[2] These motives on the part of the Seri were reciprocated by their tribal enemies; a Papago fetish in the form of an Apache arrowpoint, long worn by an aged warrior as a protection from Apache arrows, was among the spoil of the 1894 expedition; and a "poisoned" Seri arrowhead and foreshaft, worn by a superannuated Papago "doctor" as a badge of invulnerability to similar missiles, was cautiously shown to the 1895 expedition, but was held above price by its wearer—and this despite the fact that he had been christianized for decades, and retained no other pagan symbols.

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2: Kroeber E-5 (1930) 1931 NU31 Seri NU31

on a string around his neck, which he got from his father. It is a two inch length of cane, with a wooden stopper, containing a white powder of stone (?). A little of this powder put into fresh water, brings dew; into salt water, rain. 778 789

Similarly, Chico Romero wears on his neck a tiny spool-shaped object of wood, scarcely 2 cm. long, with notched ends. When he dies, this will burst; or rather, it seems that a larger object of the same shape, which another man keeps, will burst with thunder.

To get luck, a man paints a "cross" on his forehead, breast, and "bed" and goes to sleep. Then a dream comes in which he gets what he is thinking of. Sometimes the dream comes true; sometimes not. Some dreams are lies. 787

The soul (*alma*), he'ë'sax, is all over the body and is noiseless. It is "nearly the same as blood": when the blood is lost, the soul goes. Some say that when the Seri die they are reborn in the north as Cocopa. 774 775

There seem to be no special beliefs or practises about twins. 845

Antiso'ma (— Montezuma?) is the size of a child, has a beard, a golden staff, white clothes inside and black outside. He lives in a cave. Once he tried to take a young man away with him in order to dress him nicely. Later the young man's relatives went with him to find Antiso'ma again, but could not. 776

Songs

Toad was a woman who had only a breech-clout and wanted a cotton shirt. She said she would give herself to a man for one. 533

Coyote was a Seri once.

Pinacate (dung-beetle?) wanted a bride and was jealous about her.

Colaprieta, the black-bellied ant, also was a man and wanted to marry the hokö'ctim ant. He was making a house of grass for her. She was afraid of him, and her relatives took her away.

Games

The four-tube-hiding game is played with canes open at one end. These canes are: blackened all over, old man; unpainted, old woman; blackened at one end, boy; blackened in the middle, girl. The boy and girl are made by slitting off slivers on two sides. The names serve as designations only; the differences between the tubes do not enter into the game. The player with the tubes turns around, puts a piece of twig into one, fills them all with sand, and throws them before his opponent, who tries to empty the twig from the *third* tube he selects. If so, he wins the canes, that is, the right to play. If the twig is in the first tube emptied, he loses 10; if in the second, 6; if in the fourth, 4. Counters are little natural shell disks. 524